

# ELF in Teacher Education

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## 教員養成における国際共通語としての英語（ELF）

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近年、英語の多様性を反映させる試みはみられるものの依然として学習者は欧米英語信望者が多い。欧米英語信仰は英語を国際共通語として習得し、効果的に使用する妨げになる。グローバル化が進む今日、英語以外の言語を母語とする多様な言語・文化背景をもつ話者と「英語」でコミュニケーションをする機会がますます増える。本稿では、2013年に発表された『グローバル化に対応する英語教育改革』（文科省）を踏まえ、国際共通語としての英語（ELF）を再考し、教員養成課程におけるELFの位置づけを論じる。

### 1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of globalization, more and more people learn and use English as a foreign language world over today. Japan is not an exception. English is acknowledged as a language for international communication or Lingua Franca and is recognized as a tool to carry “smooth communication with people of different countries and cultures”, required in more diverse fields than the past (Commission on the Development, 2011). Using English as a Lingua Franca to communicate “with people from different countries and cultures” implies communication with not only speakers of English as a first language but also as a second or a foreign language and with diverse cultural background.

Many Japanese students and teachers of English, however, seem to hold a myth that English is a language of the UK, USA or other countries classified into the “Inner Circle” described by Braj Kachru (1992), showing preference to speaking with one of the two dominant models of native-speaker accents; namely, the standard British accent, RP (Received

Pronunciation) and the standard US accents, GA (General American) (Walker, 2010) or learn from native speakers of these countries (Yoshikawa, 2005). It can be said that it is a result of English language education, which lacks to “provide global socio-linguistic perspectives” (Kubota, 1998: 302).

The lack of critical awareness of how using “a language of power oppresses other languages, cultures, and societies” (Kubota, 1998: 304) as well as the faith in native speakers or “*neitibu shinkou*” (Honna, 2006) is an ever vicious stumbling block in becoming a confident user of English, who understands the culturally diverse interlocutor’s “thoughts and intentions based on his/her cultural and social background, logical and reasoned explanation of one’s own views” (Commission on the Development, 2011).

Learners and teachers of English alike should recognize that the goal of learning English is to be able to competently and effectively communicate with not only speakers of British and American English but also all varieties of Englishes. Not until their psychological biases are transformed will they be able to become confident and competent users of English for international communication or use English as a Lingua Franca. Thus, it would be worthwhile to rethink the notion of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as well as its role in teacher education. This paper first overviews the spread and status of English in the world today, followed by an attempt to define ELF, and it will finally discuss the significance of ELF in English education in Japan.

## 2. Spread of English and its Status in the World

What once was a language spoken more or less exclusively in the UK is spoken today in over a hundred countries as people’s first language/L1 (368,132,210) or second language/L2 (451,565,010), amounting to 821,517,390<sup>1</sup> speakers, of which 58,100,000 or only 6% are in the UK (Ethnologue). There are twenty-three countries where English is a statutory national language and one region (China-Hong Kong) where English is a statutory provincial language. English is also a de facto national

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1 calculated based on data provided by Ethnologue

language of forty countries, including the USA with over 280 million English speakers of whom approximately 10% speak it as their L2. In addition, some countries have adopted English as a de facto national working language or educational language. Besides these countries and regions where English is used either as L1 or L2, there are dozens of countries such as Japan where English is a compulsory subject at schools. There are indeed “more non-native speakers of English than there are native speakers” (Graddol, 2006 cited in Kirkpatrick, 2010: 67). Such spread implies “adaptation and non-conformity” (Widdowson, 1997: 141).

Including those learners and users of English as a foreign language, it is estimated that around 1.5 billion people learn or use English in one way or another, which number is increasing rapidly. While the fact that a language is one's L2 or a foreign language by no means imply their lower proficiency level compared to that of L1 speakers (Jenkins, 2003), these numbers indicate the fact that English is used as an L2 or a foreign language much more than as an L1. It also implies the fact that English is no longer learned to communicate with L1 speakers of English but is learned to communicate with all types of English speakers. That is, “speakers from Expanding Circle use English to communicate with speakers from other Expanding or Outer Circle countries” (Walker, 2010: 5).

### 3. Understanding ELF

English is no longer used or learned to communicate with native speakers of English but increasingly more to communicate with non-native speakers of English whose mother tongues are diverse (Matsuda, 2003; Walker, 2010). English, for example, is officially used as the working language of ASEAN, which comprises ten culturally non-English countries (Kirkpatrick, 2010); English serving as a common language or lingua franca.

ELF communication implies communicative interaction mainly in “new Englishes” which has been primarily acquired through the education system, used for a range of function and developed independent of native variety of English, and “has become localized or nativized by adopting some language features of its own, such as sounds, intonation patterns, sentence structures,

words, and expressions” (Jenkins, 2003: 23). These “new Englishes”, therefore, are detached from native speaker norms and their cultural values, which have often been misunderstood as a deficient interlanguage. However, as Widdowson (1997) has rightly put it, spread of English implies such “adaptation and non-conformity” (141), reflecting the speakers mother tongue and culture; in other words, identity.

It is clear, then, that ELF cannot be “monocentric” (Jenkins, 2007: 19) but should be “pluricentric”, reducing “the hegemony of the Anglo-American model” (Seargent, 2009: 11). ELF, by no means, is “intended to imply that learners should aim for an English that is identical in all aspects” (Jenkins, 2006: 161). While a monolithic variety of English does not exist, there are certain linguistic features that are widely used across different varieties and are widely intelligible (Jenkins, 2006). In using ELF, one should be aware of the common denominator that is mutually intelligible amongst the members of the ELF community, while at the same time be tolerant of the different characteristics pertaining to their identity and cooperative in understanding one another.

Unlike the traditional definition of lingua franca, which had no native speakers, ELF interactions at conferences, business meetings, and political gathering may also include native speakers (Jenkins, 2007). In such mixed interactions, native speakers of English should not “impose their particular set of native-speaker norms” but instead “respect ELF norm” when participating in the ELF community (Walker, 2010).

#### 4. Japanese context

In Japan, education policy has played a great role in helping shape the relationship of Japanese society and English (Seargent, 2011). Thus, it is worthwhile to look into the new English education reform plan in order to understand its effect on the relationship of Japanese society and English.

In order to respond to the rapidly globalizing world, MEXT called for a fundamental reform of English education, issuing an *English Education Reform Plan corresponding to Globalization*.

In order to promote the establishment of an educational environment which corresponds to globalization from the elementary to lower/upper secondary education stage, MEXT is working to enhance English education substantially throughout elementary to lower/secondary school upon strengthening English education in elementary school in addition to further advancing English education in lower/upper secondary school. (MEXT, 2013)

The document also entails the revision of teacher education in order to achieve the goals set forth. On a report titled *Report on the Future Improvement and Enhancement of English Education (Outline) : Five Recommendations on the English Education Reform Plan Responding to the Rapid Globalization* (2014), the Office for Promoting Foreign Language Education, International Education Division, Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau refers to the necessity of developing and improving university curricula for teacher training, exemplifying key contents in (1) elementary schools and (2) lower and upper secondary schools:

- (1) Enhancement of training on basic English phonetics and pedagogy necessary for English education at elementary schools, simulation classes including team teaching, research on educational materials, exercise for collaboration between elementary schools and junior high schools, case studies, etc. (emphases added)
- (2) Enhancement of English phonetics necessary for conducting communication activities in English during lessons at junior high and high schools, English pedagogy including theory for second language learning, communication lessons for comprehensive development of the four language skills, etc. . . . (emphases added)

While it does not specify the frame of reference, “enhancement of English phonetics” is emphasized in both examples.

MEXT has published the *Core Curriculum* for English education in 2017, which implementation in the university curricula for teacher training is mandatory. The core curriculum classifies subject knowledge of English into four areas: English communication, English linguistics, English literature and intercultural understanding. First, in terms of English communication, students in the teacher training course are to acquire a level of English proficiency to be able to use English as a medium of instruction, adapting to the level of students' understanding. Second, in addition to having an understanding on English sound system and English grammar, the mastery goals of English linguistics include understanding of the transition of English in history and the actual situation of ELF. Third, the understanding of English expressions found in English literature, the understanding of the cultures of countries and regions where English is used as well as the understanding of representative literature written in English are set as mastery goals for English literature. Finally, in addition to the cultural diversity in which a foreign language is situated as well as the actual situation and the problems of intercultural communication, the mastery goal of intercultural communication encompasses the basic understanding of the history, society and culture of the countries and regions where English is used. Two questions arise here: what is meant by countries and regions where English is used as is repeated in the aforementioned mastery goals and what is meant by understanding of the actual situation of ELF.

## 5. Japanese context

While it is not clear from the *core curriculum* which countries and regions are referred to as countries and regions where English is used or what degree of understanding of the actual situation of ELF is implied, it is clear that prospective teachers are expected to improve their English communication competence to the level at which they can confidently teach English in English, while students in English classes are expected to use English actively with one another in their English classes for as long as ten years from the third grade in elementary school until they graduate from upper secondary school. Thus, Yano's suggestion below (2011) may no

longer hold true:

Based on the hard facts of the situation which are that the Japanese do not learn English long enough and intensively enough to internalize the language and they do not need to use English intra-nationally, it is not likely that Japan will develop a variety recognizable as *Japanese English* with its own endonormative standards like those that occur in Indian English and Singaporean English (134).

Although it may not be as intensive as in countries such as India or Singapore, students will most likely be exposed to more Japanese teachers' English and will be using English more amongst themselves under the new policy. Without acceptance of such possibility and understanding of its implication, both teachers and learners will not be able to actively and confidently use English in their classes.

#### New model

Input: Japanese teachers' English (role model)



Internalization:

- (1) interaction with teachers and peers
- (2) interaction with tourists from foreign countries, who use English as a second or foreign language



Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca with Japanese identity

As early as in 1975, Takao Suzuki, a Japanese sociolinguist, has proposed use of *Englic*, which is removed from native speaker norms and their cultural values, in international communication (Matsuda, 1998; Suzuki, 2011). However, English is still, to many, the language of the UK and the US, or at best the language of the Kachruvian Inner Circle such as the UK and the US. "English is the property of native English speakers (Americans and British, more specifically), and the closer they follow the

native speakers' usage, the better", while "the idea of the Japanese variety of English" is "acceptable at the abstract level, but not at the personal level" (Matsuda, 1998: 493). Unless such perception is removed, Japanese teachers will not be able to teach their English classes in English effectively nor will the students acquire communicative competence in English, which is necessary in ELF communication.

## 6. Conclusion

As Yano (2011) rightly maintains, conceptual transfer and linguistic transfer from Japanese to English are inevitable. Just like Indian English or Singaporean English, Euro-English is emerging as a distinctive variety or group of varieties with respective identity which rejects the value of having to respect Anglo-American English norms (Jenkins, 2006). Japan should prepare themselves for the emergence of 'Japanese English' and consider effective ways to use it as ELF. It is, therefore, essential to develop prospective teachers' understanding of the concept of ELF and its value and significance in English education in Japan so that they can guide students to be an effective user of 'Japanese' English as a *Lingua Franca*.

To begin with, raising prospective teachers' awareness is essential. They should be made aware of the diverse linguistic and cultural background of English speakers or the "multiple identities of English" (Kachru, 1997) and the reality that "everybody has an accent wherever they come from" (Walker, 2010: 12) and whichever variety of English including RP and GE they speak. The curriculum needs to include English literatures from the Outer and Expanding Circles in addition to the Inner Circle varieties. The negative images pertaining to certain varieties of English must be removed, while developing "respect and appreciation of non-Western languages and cultures" (Kubota, 1998: 304). Secondly, linguistic aspects must be reanalyzed in terms of learnability and teachability along with the converging points of mutual intelligibility, reevaluating what constitutes errors and redefining them. Third, effective communication strategies must be identified. For example, both speakers and listeners can learn to accommodate to each other, productively and receptively (Walker, 2010).



Taking such steps would help the prospective teachers become “aware of the possibility of appropriating English in order to create new meanings and identities” (Kubota, 1998: 304) instead of modeling Anglo-American varieties and be role models for their students.

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